



Shasta/Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association

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June 23, 2020

VIA EMAIL [san.jose_merced@hsr.ca.gov]

Attn: Draft San Jose to Merced Project Section EIR / EIS
100 Paseo de San Antonio, Suite 300
San Jose, CA 95113

RE: Draft San Jose to Merced Project Section Environmental Impact Report / Environmental Impact Statement

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you as the Vice President and Director for Planning and Land Use of the Shasta / Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association (S/HPNA), on behalf of the Neighborhood Association (NA), with our comments and concerns regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Report / Environmental Impact Statement (EIR / EIS). The group was founded in 1984 to protect the interests of our historic and beloved community. Over the years, we have worked with the City of San Jose, developers, builders, and our neighbors to create a balanced neighborhood. Because of our involvement, we boast one of the most successful communities in the City of San Jose. S/HPNA represents 4,500 households in neighborhoods immediately west of San Jose Diridon Station, and along the west of the current Caltrain corridor from Park Avenue in the south, to West Taylor Street in the north.

Since the initial meetings for the San Jose Visual Design Guidelines for High Speed Rail, S/HPNA Board members and residents have been intimately involved in the planning stages of High-Speed Rail's infrastructure, operational parameters, and project mitigations. Therefore, it is with substantial concern that we are writing to you regarding the Draft San Jose to Merced Project Section EIR / EIS.

Our comments and concerns include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Diridon Integrated Station Concept (DISC) and City of San Jose City Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG)** – The efforts of the City of San Jose's SAAG should be incorporated into any plans HSR develops for Diridon Station. The City of San Jose, HSR, BART, Google, and the Caltrain Joint Powers Board must all work together to avoid a series of incoherent, poorly functioning connections at Diridon Station. The clear conflicts between the proposed DISC and CHSRA's graphics and alignment diagrams raise substantial concerns, as the two are mutually exclusive. The DISC envisions a raised platform, to increase access and traffic flow of all forms to, through, and beyond the station. The EIR proposes an at-grade design, addressing none of the last mile, access, or traffic issues already faced by Diridon Station. The EIR / EIS must address how to incorporate the current design parameters for the DISC, in order to create a true intermodal hub. CHSRA must commit to the inevitable supplementary environmental work that will be required to make the DISC program a functional reality. Instead, HSR would complete its EIR before the DISC program would even begin its environmental clearance. CHSRA's EIR assesses alternatives for the HSR project in isolation, but not the broader issues and solutions that will be required to provide a functional multimodal station at Diridon. Therefore, we propose that any construction between Diridon Station and Tamien Station should only proceed after the DISC design has been environmentally cleared.

- **Impacts of At-Grade Alignment South of Diridon Station** – The proposed at-grade alternative through Downtown and Willow Glen will have significant impacts upon the neighborhoods, traffic arteries, and community facilities adjacent to the proposed alignment. The taking of some or all of Fuller Park, in a City where many neighborhoods already suffer from a deficiency of park lands, is directly at-odds with the stated desire to have High-Speed Rail be an asset to the cities that it serves, rather than as a physical and economic barrier. The area immediately adjacent to Auzerais Avenue, just north of I-280, is experiencing a massive expansion in the number of housing units under construction. The traffic congestion already caused by the current at-grade crossing will increase by an order of magnitude if High-Speed Rail comes through there as part of the at-grade alignment. CHSRA should embrace the need to fully grade-separate train and vehicular / pedestrian traffic throughout the twenty-one (21) miles of HSR that is within the city limits of San Jose.
- **A Lack of Community Outreach** – The Draft EIR / EIS is the result of nearly ten years of hearings, public meetings, and community working groups. To push forward the Draft EIR / EIS during a global pandemic, when direct, meaningful community engagement is patently impossible, does a disservice to all of the community members who invested thousands of man hours in the creation of a dynamic, truly community-serving high speed rail service. Even allowing for the extended public comment period (for which we are grateful), and the subsequent ten months to revise the Draft EIR / EIS, the HSR process is more than a year ahead of schedule. Rather than forcing through a Draft document when those with the most insight to offer are possibly facing unprecedented financial and health challenges, why not delay the process until such time that authentic community outreach can be made to all concerned citizens? The project deserves no less than that.

Bringing a transportation service like High-Speed Rail to San Jose is something that can be of great benefit to us all. However, citing that benefit as a reason to approve unassailed an alignment and set of environmental impacts that do not correspond to untold hours of previous community involvement is, if you will excuse the transportation idiom, putting the cart before the horse. The scope and vision for High-Speed Rail cannot be compromised for the sake of expedience.

Respectfully submitted,



Edward Saum
Vice President & Director for Planning & Land Use
Shasta/Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association